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FOREWORD

This edition of THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA, the 70th in print, provides comprehensive coverage of political and economic life at the regional, subregional and national levels. The volume is divided into three separate, though complementary, sections. In Part One a collection of introductory essays discusses some of the most pertinent issues affecting the region. Topics covered include Saudi-Iranian relations, political Islam, China's growing presence in the region, US regional policy, the issue of Kurdish political autonomy and identity, the transition to sustainable energy in the Gulf states, and the religions of the region. In Part Two specialist authors, researchers and commentators examine in detail the main political and economic events in each of the countries and territories in the region. In addition, all statistical and directory material has been thoroughly updated. Extensive coverage of international organizations and research bodies active in the Middle East and North Africa is included in a section of Regional Information, together with a comprehensive archive of documents related to the history of Israel and the Palestinian territories, and bibliographies of essential publications for further study. A calendar of the key political events of 2022–23 enables rapid reference to the year's main developments.

While relatively quiet in terms of elections and changes of government, the year under review saw a number of potentially seismic shifts in intraregional relations. Most notable was the groundbreaking rapprochement and re-establishment of diplomatic relations in March 2023 between long-term adversaries Saudi Arabia and Iran—a development that could help to reduce tensions across the region and bring some stability to areas of conflict, particularly Yemen, where the ceasefire, although still holding, appeared very fragile. The fact that Saudi-Iranian 'normalization' was achieved largely through Chinese mediation is also perhaps indicative of a desire on the part of the People's Republic of China to play a greater diplomatic role in the Middle East at a time of perceived US disengagement from the region. A further sign of changes to the balance of power on the global stage that directly involved the Middle East and North Africa was the invitation in August by the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) grouping to Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (together with Argentina and Ethiopia) to join the bloc in January 2024.

Another significant development in the region in this period was the first step in the political rehabilitation of the long-ostracized Syrian Arab Republic in May 2023, when the League of Arab States (Arab League) initiated a process of normalization between Syria and other Arab countries by agreeing to reinstate Syria's membership (suspended in 2011 upon the outbreak of civil war in that country). Israel, conversely, appeared increasingly isolated in the region following the installation of a new Government headed by Benjamin Netanyahu that was dominated by right-wing nationalist parties. The Government's subsequent plans to introduce controversial legislation significantly reducing the powers of the Supreme Court provoked widespread domestic and international criticism and created serious divisions among the Israeli people.

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan of Türkiye and President Kaïs Saïed of Tunisia both consolidated their hold on power: the former by securing a hard-fought victory in a general election in May 2023 and the latter by continuing to quash dissent through a variety of methods, including placing opposition activists on trial in military courts and dissolving local councils. Saïed's avowedly temporary intervention in running the country appeared ever-more likely to become effectively a long-term autocracy.

The stifling of opposition by those in power was a recurrent theme elsewhere in the region. The large-scale 'Women, Life, Freedom' protests that broke out across Iran in September 2022, following the death of a young Kurdish women in custody, appeared for a while to pose a significant challenge to the Islamist Government and attracted considerable support in the West. However, by early 2023 the protests had largely fizzled out as a result of a harsh crackdown by the authorities, and hopes of reform in Iran were, once again, dashed.

The entire content of the print edition of THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA is available online at www.europaworld.com. This prestigious resource incorporates sophisticated search and browse functions as well as specially commissioned visual and statistical content. An ongoing programme of updates of key areas of information ensures currency of content, and enhances the richness of the coverage.

The Editors would like to express their thanks to all the contributors for their articles and advice, as well as to the numerous governments and organizations that provided statistical and other information.

September 2023

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Editors gratefully acknowledge the interest and co-operation of numerous national statistical and information offices, and government departments, as well as embassies in London and throughout the region, whose kind assistance in updating the material contained in THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA is greatly appreciated.

We acknowledge particular indebtedness for permission to reproduce material from the following publications: the United Nations' statistical databases and *Demographic Yearbook, Statistical Yearbook and Monthly Bulletin of Statistics*; the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's Institute for Statistics database; the *Human Development Report* of the United Nations Development Programme; the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations' statistical database; the statistical databases of the World Health Organization; the statistical databases of the UNCTAD/WTO International Trade Centre; the International Labour Office's statistical database; the World Bank's statistical databases, especially the World Development Indicators database, and the *World Development Report*; the International Monetary Fund's statistical database, *International Financial Statistics* and *Government Finance Statistics Yearbook*; the World Tourism Organization's *World Tourism Barometer* and *Yearbook of Tourism Statistics, 2023 edition*, UNWTO, Madrid; the US Geological Survey; the International Telecommunication Union; the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia's *National Accounts Studies of the ESCWA Region*; Lloyd's List; and *The Military Balance 2023*, a publication of the International Institute for Strategic Studies, Arundel House, 6 Temple Pl., London, WC2R 2PG, UK. We are also grateful to the Israeli embassy, London, for the use of two maps illustrating the disengagement agreements between Israel and Egypt, and Israel and Syria (both 1974).

HEALTH AND WELFARE STATISTICS: SOURCES AND DEFINITIONS

Total fertility rate Source: WHO Global Health Observatory. The number of children that would be born per woman, assuming no female mortality at child-bearing ages and the age-specific fertility rates of a specified country and reference period.

Under-5 mortality rate Source: WHO Global Health Observatory. Defined by WHO as the probability of a child born in a specific year or period dying before reaching the age of five, if subject to the age-specific mortality rates of the year or period.

HIV/AIDS Source: UNAIDS. Estimated percentage of adults aged 15 to 49 years living with HIV/AIDS. < indicates 'fewer than'.

COVID-19 Sources: Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) at Johns Hopkins University (JHU) via Our World In Data: Hannah Ritchie, Edouard Mathieu, Lucas Rodés-Guirao, Cameron Appel, Charlie Giattino, Esteban Ortiz-Ospina, Joe Hasell, Bobbie Macdonald, Diana Beltekian and Max Roser (2020)—'Coronavirus Pandemic (COVID-19)'. Published online at OurWorldInData.org. (Retrieved from https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus); Our World in Data: Mathieu, E., Ritchie, H., Ortiz-Ospina, E. et al. 'A global database of COVID-19 vaccinations' (Nature Human Behaviour, 2021). For reasons of comparability, UN population estimates have been used for most calculations.

Cumulative confirmed deaths (per 100,000 persons)

Attribution of cause of death to COVID-19 is based on classifications from the World Health Organization's International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD) guidelines, supported by national advice to health practitioners. Data refer to confirmed deaths only, actual numbers are likely to be greater.

Fully vaccinated population (% of total population)

'Fully vaccinated' denotes receipt of all doses prescribed by specific vaccination regimes, this may vary depending on the vaccine. Alternative definitions of fully vaccinated, including receipt of only part of a dosing regime, or recovery from illness, have been disregarded. For the sake of best comparison, rates are based on the total rather than eligible population in each case.

Health expenditure Source: WHO Global Health Expenditure database. Covering the provision of health services (preventive and curative), family planning activities, and nutrition activities. Public sources include domestic revenue as internal transfers and grants, transfers, subsidies to voluntary health insurance beneficiaries, non-profit institutions serving households (NPISH) or enterprise financing schemes as well as compulsory prepayment and social health insurance contributions. External grants or loans for healthcare provided by international agencies and other national authorities are not included.

US $ per head (PPP)

International dollar estimates. Current domestic general government expenditures as a ratio of total population.

% of GDP

The share of domestic general government resources used to funs health expenditures, given as a percentage of the economy as measured by gross domestic product (GDP).

Public expenditure % of total health expenditure

Share of current health expenditures funded from general government sources, social health insurance and compulsory prepayment.

Access to water and sanitation Source: WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme on Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (JMP) (*Progress on Household Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, 2000–2020*). Defined in terms of the percentage of the population using improved facilities in terms of the type of technology and levels of service afforded. For water, this includes house connections, public standpipes, boreholes with handpumps, protected dug wells, protected spring and rainwater collection; allowance is also made for other locally defined technologies. Sanitation is defined to include connection to a sewer or septic tank system, pour-flush latrine, simple pit or ventilated improved pit latrine, again with allowance for acceptable local technologies. Access to water and sanitation does not imply that the level of service or quality of water is 'adequate' or 'safe'.

Carbon dioxide emissions Source: World Bank, World Development Indicators database, citing CAIT data. Climate Watch. 2020. GHG Emissions. Washington, DC: World Resources Institute. Available at: https://climatewatchdata.org/ghg-emissions. Emissions comprise those resulting from the burning of fossil fuels (including those produced during consumption of solid, liquid and gas fuels and from gas flaring) and from the manufacture of cement, but exclude emissions resulting from land-use transformation and forestry.

Human Development Index (HDI) Source: UNDP, *Human Development Report* (2021–22). A summary of human development measured by three basic dimensions: prospects for a long and healthy life, measured by life expectancy at birth; knowledge, measured by adult literacy rate (two-thirds' weight) and the combined gross enrolment ratio in primary, secondary and tertiary education (one-third weight); and standard of living, measured by GDP per head (PPP US $). The index value obtained lies between zero and one. A value above 0.800 indicates very high human development, between 0.700 and 0.799 high human development, between 0.550 and 0.699 medium human development, and below 0.550 low human development. A centralized data source for all three dimensions was not available for all countries. In some cases other data sources were used to calculate a substitute value; however, this was excluded from the ranking. Other countries, including non-UNDP members, were excluded from the HDI altogether. In total, 191 countries were ranked for 2021.

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